

ANSWERING ISKCON

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Why only Krishna is not Supreme Part 3

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In this post I will discuss the interpretation of the 27th verse in the 14th chapter of the Bhagavat Gita , the Shankara Bhashya says the following ” “For in me, in the Pratyagatman, in the true Inner Self abides Brahman, the Supreme Self (Paramatman) who is immortal and immutable; who is the Eternal Dharma, i.e who is attainable by the Dharma of Jnana Yoga or wisdom-devotion ; who is the unfailing Bliss, the Supreme Bliss, the Bliss Immortal. Because I,-the Pratyagatman, the Immortal Self,-am the abode

of the Supreme Self, therefore by Right Knowledge one sees that the Pratyagatman is the very Supreme Self. It is this truth which has been declared in the preceding verse in the words “he is fitted for becoming Brahman (referring to the 23rd verse)”

The 1st part “For in me, in the Pratyagatman inner self” remember in the 13th Chapter Krishna says he is knower of the body, meaning he is the knower of the body, vital energies and the mental constitution. Actually all of us are that inner self of Sakshi. So when Krishna is saying “I” or “me” he mostly refers to himself as this inner self. All of us are this inner self only. In short the inner self is the observer of the 3 states of waking, dream and dreamless deep sleep. This is the basis of Nirguna Brahman, now why do we say so, there are 2 types of knowledge in the study of Vedanta, Paroksha Jnanam (indirect knowledge) and Aparoksha Jnaanam (direct knowledge), now in Paroksha Jnaanam you say that the Brahman is so and so, it is formless, without qualities, undivided, non-dual and so on. But all of this is Paroksha Jnaanam, since Brahman is an object here, to know that “I am the non dual, formless Brahman who is omnipresent”, is Aparoksha Jnaanam. Hence “I” over here is the Pratishta or basis for knowing the Brahman directly. Hence “I” is the abode of Brahman, “I” over here refers to the Sakshi or observer of the 3 states as described above. Hence Amratsaya Avyayasya cha meaning that which is immortal and immutable for that “I” is the basis. Shashvatasya Dharmasya – On the basis of eternal Dharma which is Jnana Yoga of knowledge of Advaita Vedanta. Sukhasya aikaantikasya cha –Supreme bliss or unending bliss is attained through this alone. Hence we easily establish that the verse in no way contributes to proving that Krishna is primarily Saguna. Now we will take up the second interpretation given by Adi Shankara and explain it further. Following is the quote

“By ‘Brahman,’ is here meant the Conditioned Brahman, who alone can be spoken of by any such word as ‘Brahman.’ the Unconditioned and the Unutterable, I am the abode of the Conditioned Brahman, who is Immortal and indestructible. I am also the abode of the Eternal Dharma of Wisdom Devotion, and the abode of the unfailing Bliss born of that devotion.”

Now what is meant by conditioned Brahman, it means Saguna Brahman, the Brahman is recognised through Gunas or qualities, the Kalyana or Auspicious Gunas described by Ramanujacharya, Shankara clarifies that the Brahman spoken of here is not Nirguna Brahman but Saguna Brahman, now Saguna Brahman is both with form and formless, one may ask how Saguna Brahman is formless. Brahman plus Maya is Ishwara or Saguna Brahman. Now we need to understand what ‘Maya’ is actually. For the creation to take place we need 3 conditions, time, space and substance. The basis for space is Satwa, the basis for time is Rajas, the basis for substance is Tamas. How this is so, I will explain much later. Now this Satwa, Rajas and Tamas is what we are calling Gunas, these Gunas rise from some thing called Prakriti, this Prakriti is nothing but the seed of these Gunas. Ishwara is the one who controls Prakriti, since Prakriti is in his control he can

take any form. Another name for Prakriti is Maya, now this Prakriti is the body of Ishwara, since he is associated with Prakriti we call him Saguna Brahman. Since Ishwara can take any form, even the forms of Ishwara we call as Saguna Brahman. In this way I am completely negating Iskcon's concept of Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. Now I would need to explain this concept much later and what they actually quote to justify this. For now the explanation given by me should suffice. Now this Ishwara is immortal and indestructible, why do we say so, since Ishwara is beyond Prakriti as explained by me above. Now Brahman is the one beyond Ishwara, since Ishwara not associated with Prakriti is Brahman, such a Brahman is called Nirguna Brahman, which is what is referred to here as "Unconditioned Brahman". Ultimately, even Prakriti has no independent existence and does not satisfy the category of Satyam (that which doesn't undergo change), hence what exists is Brahman alone. This is called Paramartha Satta or ultimate reality, the world which we live in is called Vyavaharika Satta, all Advaitins accept Ishwara as Vyavahaarika Satta the reality in which we transact. Now next one, "I am also the abode of the Eternal Dharma of Wisdom Devotion", I am of the opinion that Devotion here as told by Shankara is not the Devotion we understand it to be. Bhakti is the word. Bhakti comes from the root "Bhaj", this doesn't necessarily mean worship as people understand it to be. In Hindi we have the word "Vibhaajan", meaning dividing, hence "Bhajan" would mean the opposing meaning undividing, so Krishna here is the abode of the Dharma which helps one see the undivided Brahman. He is also the abode of the bliss born of it, when a Jnaani sees the whole world as undivided Brahman. Not as the divided Brahman which is appearing in the form of Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Ganesh and so on. This in short is about the verse and Adi Shankara's explanation. With this I establish that the strongest claim made by Iskcon on the basis of Bhagavat Gita stands refuted.

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